C M 175 462 [846] arms. It is true that all this work which the Indian women must perform is made more tolerable by the fact that they are very strong and robust. Proof of this robustness is what they do as soon as they give birth: going to the river or stream with their newborn child they go into the water and swim about and wash themselves thoroughly, and do not experience the least harm as a result. However, should the husband capture a woman from some Indian nation or from among the C M Spaniards, her life is spared so that she may serve his wife as a slave, [595] and him as a concubine—but he must be secretive in his relationships with the captured woman for the wives are extraordinarily jealous and will make things difficult for the husband should he make advances C M towards a Spanish woman. . . .

175 [164] "Smallpox is a great scourge to these nations, and makes terrible inroads into them because they have no doctors other than the C M old fakers, and if the latter do not cure the sick person, and they [164] usually don't, then all will abandon him to his fate. When anyone dies, those who happen to be present open up a grave for him on the very spot, bury him stretched full-length, stick a spear into the ground over his resting place and hang a Christian's or some other enemy's skull on the C M shaft's end; then they desert the place and never return to it while [771] memory of it lasts. Not even a trace of religion has been found among them, rather are they perfect athiests without the least knowledge about the afterlife or the immortality of the soul. They have a certain re- C M spect for their female witchdoctors, more out of fear of what they may 175 do to them than from any good they may hope to receive from them. 756 These witchdoctors try to make the others believe that they hold in their hands the power to heal or to make sick, and these are the ones who resist the Gospel most vigorously, using their influence to keep their followers from receiving Holy Baptism or allowing their children to receive it, and persuading them that baptism will kill them. To this end, to bolster their arguments, they take advantage of what happens in any mission post when the missionaries only baptize those who are about to die, and as the Indians then usually see such a person die, the noxious error becomes more firmly rooted in their untutored minds." "Descripción del Chaco" [Chorographic Description of the Chaco] page 82.

C M 114 This account by the Missionary Fathers is confirmed by what has been observed by travelers who have visited these same Indians in more modern times, even in the present day. [579]

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during the night to celebrate the occasion.

It happened that the local Matacos returned about this time from the sugar harvest in the Salta plantations which were about seventy leagues from my camp, and it befell that every day, for some time, groups of Indians would station themselves at my door and ask me for a Toba head. I would let them have one, always repeating, as it were a refrain: "Toba catchia, catchia...." (bad, bad Toba), and they would go through the usual routine.

Chapter VIII

Religion

771 ●

The Chaco Indians have no God. I don't mean only that they do not conceive of God as a thinker or philosopher might but that they do not even conceive of one as do even untutored whites or Chinese.

[198] It is affirmed that the Pampas Indians do have a God, but this report must be considered as a recent importation and due to the continual contact of the Pampas with whites and with their brothers from over the mountains who were converted to Christianity shortly after the conquest.

But if the inhabitants of the Chaco do not know anything about God they nonetheless have their form of worship: the cult of spirits and of the stars.

I believe that there can be no doubt that the Chaco Indians are, generally speaking, as primitive as any of the world's other Indians and savages.

Now some philosopher-historians assure us that man's first religious stage is that of fetichism, which means the worship of fetiches, a word with which the Negroes of Africa signify the brute objects of their adoration.

Without denying that this may be or may have been the case where the Africans are concerned I nevertheless believe, at least regarding our Indians here, that the first stage in religion is not fetichism but spiritism of a sort which will later be described.

It seems to me that some philosophers, among them, 771 ●
Humboldt in his Cosmos, have pointed out this same fact and have given it a name which I cannot now recall.

It is very difficult to get any information from the Indians 123
regarding their beliefs: they, in spite of having a deep disregard 771
and scorn for the mysteries of the Christian faith, do all they can to avoid being ridiculed, threatened and catecized by their presumptious and intolerant enemies.

Faustino, a Christian and a refugee from amongst them, when questioned by me regarding any of their religious practices, would answer: "I do not know, sir -- the Indians are very distrustful."

The following which I am about to recount I gathered directly from some of them after having been successful in inspiring them with confidence by talking with them, giving them presents, being very friendly and having close acquaintance with them and by letting them see that I had a high regard for their beliefs. 776

Among the Matacos the spirits are called a'hót, and among the Vilelas, cokss.

These spirits live underground but at nighttime they come up out of the earth and wander about near men's houses; they also enter the bodies of persons and usually cause them to become diseased. The a'hót ride upon the wind, accompany storms (or [753]
are indeed the very storms themselves) and dance around the villages, huts and persons whom they wish to injure. The most terrible a'hót is smallpox, against which the witchdoctors are absolutely powerless. So terrified are the Indians of this a'hót that when it appears in a hauet-éi (village) they all abandon it as fast as they can, usually setting fire to it and abandoning the sick there. In spite of this [199] smallpox wreaks havoc among 164
them, mostly, I believe, because of not taking the proper precautions (which is impossible, their houses and clothing being what they are) rather than because of lack of domestic and personal cleanliness which, in so far as I have been able to observe, is quite adequate. Practically all cases of smallpox prove fatal, and that is why one sees so few Indians marked by the disease.

Every man has a soul which, after he has died, goes down 775
into the earth to join its companions, amongst whom he enjoys

609 776 [551]

The Indians have great faith in the power of their a'hót. One of my Indian guides, Tajo ["slash" --Translator] by name (so called because he had a scar on his face) in order to prove to me the indubitable power of the a'hóts, and the crass ignorance of the whites who deny their existence, told me the following:

"It happened that a tribe was returning from a sugar plantation in the province of Salta. It was the season of algarrobo pods and one night all the people were celebrating, singing and dancing. Suddenly they became aware of the approach of a white man who was singing -- they could hear the noise made by the horse's hooves and by the large silver spurs.

"As soon as he arrived at the place where the people were gathered he halted and began to scold them for what they were doing, wishing to put a stop to their activity. The people did not like the white man's interference and said to the hayagüe ["witch doctor"--Translator] that he make him go away. The hayagüé, unable to bring this about by peaceful means said to the white who was insisting on stopping and profaning the celebration:

"'Now you will see if we are useless people and how strong is the a'hót.' He bent down, covered himself and shouted to the a'hót: 'Strike the white man down with an arrow and make him see if it is true that we are worthless people.' 'It is well,' answered the a'hót.

"Immediately a sound was heard coming up from beneath the ground, like the snapping of a stick. It was an arrow which had struck home. The white man suddenly slumped from off his horse. He was dead. The a'hót had shot the arrow into him because the white man had not wanted to believe in the a'hót."

771● 776

The whole tribe swears to have witnessed the whole thing.

It is remarkable that the object, if not of worship then at least of recognition, be of an evil nature; for in the last analysis the a'hót is nothing [203] if not an evil power or one capable of evil. If we wish to consider such a recognition as the first glimmering of a religion, then we must confess that religion has as its base, fear of evil and the desire to command it.

Mataco SI7
Choroti SK6

M /320 cont./

771 They have a vague idea of superior beings, whom they fear
776 without worshiping them; the cleverest one becomes the sorcerer
756 and exploits the poverty of his companions, especially today when
648 they are earning money from the whites, to whom they lend im-
464 portant services.

M They frequently move from the region that they occupy to
167 the Argentine Republic; they work, dress, learn some Spanish
177 and a slight smattering of civilization, and return to their lands to live as before.

Choroti

Ci The zone located southeast of Toba territory is occupied
131 by the Choroti Indians, who have their own language. They
197 occupy the geographic degree 22° 30' latitude and 64° 10' longitude, on the left bank of the Pilcomayo River.

Ci They are quite numerous and peaceful, and they are not
181 treacherous like their neighbors, the Toba. Nevertheless, they
648 inspire respect in all the neighboring tribes; if a mission were to be established at said degree, the conquest of all the Bolivian territory /321/ up to 24° would be accomplished without the need of so many small forts, which are such a great expense to the Nation and which do not create centers of trade and civilization.

Ci Father Gianelli in years past visited the Choroti Indians,
797 was received with displays of affection and appreciation, and
177 found among them good inclinations toward becoming civilized, but at that time the harvest was too much for so few evangelical workers.

Ci The Choroti are not so lazy and savage as the other tribes;
181 they devote themselves to the cultivation of a few seeds and to
241 the raising of cattle, although on a small scale. They are also
231 hunters, however, and when they occupy the banks of the
224 Pilcomayo, they take advantage of the fruits the river brings them, especially in the great floods.

Choroti SK6
Mataco SI7
Güisnais

Ci 301 302 171 /321 cont./

Doubtless through being very close to the Toba, they pierce their ear lobes, in which they put pieces of wood, and they also stain their faces.

Ci 648 [464] In the expeditions to the Paraguay they have never shown themselves to be hostile to the whites and soldiers; rather they have lent important services and it was they who saved the life of Señor Touvar and his companions when they became separated from the expedition. Therefore the reduction of these Indians to civilized life would be very profitable.

Güisnáis

M 131 101 These Indians occupy the western bank of the Pilcomayo facing the Choroti Indians and southwest of the region occupied by the Mataco. The geographic degree of their territory, with a very slight difference, is the same as that of the Choroti, since they are separated from the latter only by the river bed.

M 101 181 241 231 197 They are a division of the Mataco; they speak the latter's language with very little difference; their customs are nearly identical and their number quite small. They are of a peaceful nature like the Choroti, and like them, they plant gourds and other vegetables. They also devote themselves to the raising of domestic animals, such as cows, horses, sheep, goats, and chickens.

M 167 177 464 224 Even the Güisnáis frequently come out for jobs in the Argentine Republic, from where they also bring back weapons, in order to use them particularly in the woods, killing birds, wild boars, deer, and other quadrupeds.

M 174 771 776 [756] They have more religious ideas than other tribes, and it seems that their great-grandparents might have belonged to some former Argentine mission, because, more than others, they recognize a true divinity. /322/ Nonetheless in their great ignorance they confuse ideas, and in great fear they recognize in sorcerers a power that they do not have.